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Commandery

OF THE STATE

— OF —

CALIFORNIA

MILITARY ORDER

OF THE

Loyal Legion

OF THE

UNITED STATES.

By
Wm H. A. Garley

THE
Loyal Californians

— OF —

✠ 1861 ✠

— • • —

A Paper Prepared and Read Before

CALIFORNIA COMMANDERY

— OF THE —

MILITARY ORDER

— OF THE —

Loyal Legion of the United States,

JANUARY 31, 1893.

—

BY COMPANION

HUGH A. GORLEY,

Captain 1st California Volunteer Infantry.

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THE Loyal Californians of 1861.

COMMANDER AND COMPANIONS:—

Papers have been read before this Commandery covering, in a general way, the political and military attitude of California during the great Rebellion, including the prominent actors of that time; but no pen has yet, nor ever can, portray the indignation, the chagrin, the patriotism, and the final determination of the loyal rank and file of California's hardy yeomanry when it was learned beyond a doubt, in the early Spring of 1861, that Americans, disloyal, had taken the first step to disrupt this Government.

Through the lens of time we behold San Francisco and other towns throughout the State emptying their population into the streets, thousands of people scanning with eager eye the bulletin-boards, and with nervous anxiety reading the following dispatches that are being flashed over Eastern wires and conveyed to the Pacific Coast by Pony Express—the information that civil war had actually commenced; that Confederate troops are pouring into Charleston, eager for collision; that Fort Sumter would be attacked without waiting for the Abolition fleet; eagerness for the conflict is unbounded; seven thousand Confederate troops occupy the defenses, and as many more in reserve; General Beauregard ordered to demand the evacuation of Fort Sumter; if refused, to reduce the Fort; Major Anderson refuses; Beauregard opens fire, and Major Anderson, after a fervent prayer to the “God of Nations,” returns the bombardment; the engagement becomes terrific; barracks of Fort Sumter on fire; flames become general; men stifled by intense heat and

smoke; hot shot and shells into the Fort; magazines explode; flames spread to the gates; the Fort fast becoming a ruin; the Old Flag shot down, but up again; Anderson still refuses to surrender.

LATER.—Major Anderson evacuates Fort Sumter to a force of 7000 Rebels; the North electrified; intense excitement; loyal States wheeling into line to avenge the insulted Government and Flag; the Government to be sustained at whatever sacrifice; President Lincoln calling for troops, and the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment (God bless it!) is leaving for Washington, being the first to respond to the call; loyal hearts trusting to God and to energetic patriotism.

These dispatches were electrical. Loyal Californians threw the Stars and Stripes to the breeze, defiant and determined. Isolated, as we were, from our Atlantic brethren, dependent, in a great measure, upon our own resources, we considered ourselves in an alarming and precarious situation.

It was well known in military circles in Washington that a deliberate plan was formed to revolutionize California and join her fortunes to the Confederacy. We, too, felt as though we were upon a volcano of social disruption, and, with a Southern man in command of the Department of the Pacific, did not know what the next minute would bring forth—that the guns of Alcatraz might signal us at any moment to throw up our hands.

This anxiety and uncertainty lasted until the 25th of April, 1861, when, like an angel of mercy, unexpectedly the following order spread its protecting wings over the entire Pacific Coast:

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE PACIFIC, {
SAN FRANCISCO, April 25, 1861. }

[ORDERS No. 5.]

In compliance with Special Orders No. 86, dated War Department, Adjutant-General's Office, Washington, March 23, 1861, I hereby assume command of this Department. All concerned will govern themselves accordingly.

E. V. SUMNER,

Brigadier-General U. S. Army.

Official:

[Signed] R. C. DRUM,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

This decisive and comprehensive epistle was a bombshell in the camp of those long-haired, broad-brimmed, crook-caned "Gentry," Knights of the "Golden Circle," who, up to this hour, were as thick as leaves in Vallambrosa. They suddenly become scarce—with "G. T. T." (gone to Texas) marked upon their doors. The embryo Confederate Generals and officers of all grades found in this terse order an end to all their golden dreams.

General Sumner's administration was commenced by the removal of all doubtful officers from important commands, and in their stead placed men of known loyalty and fidelity. Loyal hearts beat freer. A call for California troops was announced, and over 16,000 loyal Californians sprang to the front. In imagination we can see the Column from California, under its able and efficient leader, General Carleton, winding its way over the dreary sand deserts toward the Rio Grande, and yonder beneath the shades of the Rocky Mountains, in the "City of the Saints," the heroic Connor with his brave command, while far to the northward, stretching from the Cascades of the Columbia to the north-western boundary of our country, guarding with jealous eye the interests of the Republic, is the unnumbered infantry regiment of California Volunteers under the command of Colonel Justus Steinberger—all toiling in the interest of the Union; while away at the front, with uplifted blades flashing in the sunlight as they descend upon their foes, we see the impetuous "California Hundred and Battalion."

Well do we remember with what youthful pride we received the following letter:

STATE OF CALIFORNIA, EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, }
SACRAMENTO, August 19, 1861. }

Captain Gorley: The tender of your company's service is accepted for Overland Mail Service. You will at once present yourself and company at the Headquarters of Brigadier-General E. V. Sumner, San Francisco, who will muster you into service.

Respectfully, JOHN G. DOWNEY, Governor.

The yell from the boys that greeted the reading of this letter would put to blush the old Rebel yell, which, no doubt, still lingers in the ear of some of you to-day. There

was some disappointment, however, as our expectations were that we would be called East. In obedience to this letter, we commenced our march from San Jose to the Presidio with fifty-five men, with many a "God bless you" along the route. Upon our return to Santa Clara Valley to gather up the remainder of the company, we received the following dispatch:

SAN FRANCISCO, August 24, 1861.

Captain Gorley: Captain Smith from Calaveras is at the Presidio with twenty-seven men. Will unite with you and your fifty-five men now at the Presidio. You had better report here at once and have this done.

E. V. SUMNER,

Brigadier-General U. S. A., Commanding.

Receiving a dispatch from such high authority almost took away our breath. However, we returned with twenty more men, good and true, and were then mustered into the United States service, without joining forces with Captain Smith. We were then assigned to the 1st California Infantry, Colonel Carleton commanding. Our experience in getting into the service of our country is but the experience of others under like circumstances.

Besides the sixteen thousand troops which California gave to the Union, she shipped from the port of San Francisco in treasure and bullion (from January 1, 1861, to January 1, 1866,) the sum of \$229,443,811. During the same years merchandise to the amount of \$62,156,647; this statement excludes the many millions through private hands.

So, gentlemen, you will perceive that we were not idle here while our Eastern brethren were fighting there.

Commander and Companions, we read the foregoing as a prelude to one among the many important episodes in the history of the service of the California Volunteers, viz.: the capture of a party of desperate and determined men, most of whom were commissioned officers in the Confederate service, known as the Showalter Party.

It must be remembered that the right of the great Army of the Republic rested on the Atlantic seaboard, while its left rested upon the shores of the Pacific. The position

occupied by the California troops threw them so far out of the line of fire of the enemy that in the general crash of battle on the right and centre they were almost entirely lost sight of in the general and hasty making up of history.

But notwithstanding the halo of glory which so deservedly rests upon the brows of our Eastern comrades, the California Volunteers have the proud consolation of saving this Western Empire of broad and prolific acres and its mighty mountains, the source of the mineral wealth of our great American Republic, by erecting a wall of steel from the Columbia on the North to the Rio Grande on the South.

For the information of Companions I will state that the leader of this party, although a Northern man, had allied himself to the Chivalry wing of the Democratic party in the early history of California. He became a leader of a rough class of politicians, was elected to the Legislature, and killed a fellow member by the name of Piercy in a duel at Charley Fairfax's place in Marin county.

This force had been recruited in California by Showalter to co-operate with Confederates organized in Texas for the express purpose of invading Arizona and California, and to hold them as a part of the Southern Confederacy. They were bold and daring men, selected expressly for bold and daring deeds. They were wily and suspicious, and covered their movements so completely that Government detectives were unable to see anything in their actions to warrant an arrest.

Colonel Carleton, however, who commanded the Southern District of California, with headquarters at Los Angeles, had an eye upon them from the time they entered his Department until they were captured.

I was stationed at Camp Wright, Oak Grove, near Warner's Rancho, San Diego county, on the old overland stage route, which crossed the desert to Fort Yuma. Our command was composed of Companies D, G and F, 1st California Infantry, and a detachment of California Volunteer Cavalry under Lieut. Wellman, the whole under the command of Major Ed. A. Rigg. Letters were received daily from

Colonel Carleton informing our commander of the movements of Showalter's party. Finally our command was ordered to enter the field and capture this "outfit" before it crossed the Colorado into Arizona.

Active operations began with us. Every road approaching our camp was strictly guarded. Scouts were sent out in every direction—over mountains, through ravines, deep cañons, and across desert wastes; signal stations were erected on lofty mountain peaks—so that nothing was left undone that could be done in order to secure success and fulfill the orders from headquarters. No one as yet knew the strength of this party, and various reports were brought in, some placing the number as high as one hundred men who were moving in the direction of our camp.

Then, again, we would hear that this force had broken into detachments and were moving by different routes, but all aiming for our position.

As a matter of course we prepared for a fight, and while I write I can look through the lens of time and see how eagerly the hearts of those brave young soldiers beat for that chance.

At midnight, November 26, 1861, if my memory serves me right, Wellman's bugles sounded "Boots and Saddles," and away went those brave fellows into the dark and dismal mountain fastness, on a mission which no one knew but the commanding officer and those who were entrusted with the secret.

On the evening of the 27th I received a "Paper Cap" informing me of my official duty on the morrow, i. e., Commander of Camp Wright until further notice. At the same time I was ordered to have my company (D, 1st Infantry, under command of Lieut. Vestal) ready to march at daylight, with two days' rations in their haversacks and sixty rounds of ball cartridges to the man.

On the 28th of November, according to orders, Company D marched out of camp, accompanied by Major Rigg, leaving me to assume command, as directed.

The following letter I received late in the afternoon of

the 28th, showing what anxiety the Major was laboring under for the success of the expedition:

IN CAMP, WARNER'S RANCH, }
November 28, 1861. }

Captain: If Lieut. Wellman has returned send him on here at once with his detachment of cavalry. I need him as soon as possible, and before daylight if he can get here. If he has not arrived, let Lieut. Taylor get a mule from Mr. Poole and go to Temecula and send him on. If Wellman has taken the trail after the party he is looking for, get the Alcalde (Indian) at Temecula to send an express after him. The party we want are on the road from Temecula to San Jose Valley, and will be in to-night if they are not alarmed. They may go off to Ysabell, but I think not. The Alcalde is the Indian who brought in the express to-day. I think he has but one eye. Keep this to yourself, except to explain to Lieut. Taylor what I want him to do. If Lieut. Wellman has taken the right trail let him come on here by it, but send an express from Temecula to him, giving him the information that the party were at Pomona to-day at 10 o'clock A. M. Pomona is on that trail.

Respectfully,

E. A. RIGG, Major Commanding.

To Captain H. A. Gorley, Camp Wright.

P. S.—Keep the men quiet, but wide awake, and ready to move at a moment's notice.

E. A. R.

The instructions in the above letter were complied with as far as possible, but Lieut. Wellman was by this time far out in hot pursuit of the enemy, and therefore Lieut. Taylor failed to connect, but brought back the information, obtained through the old Alcalde's express, that Wellman was on the right track, and would drive Showalter and his men into San Jose Valley, unless he captured them on the mountains.

This was communicated to Major Rigg in his camp at Warner's Ranch (some twenty miles distant) by daylight on the 29th. Company D was put in motion to cover the trail leading into San Jose Valley from the mountains without delay. Wellman encamped near the western summit of the mountain (up which he had been traveling) on the night of the 28th.

At dawn on the 29th he took up the chase, and on reaching the summit, just at sunrise, he discovered his game at breakfast half way down the eastern side of the mountain. Upon being discovered the enemy sprang to arms. Placing

a white handkerchief upon his sword, Wellman rode into their camp and demanded their surrender. This proposition was flatly refused by the fiery Showalter. Wellman told him that his orders were to arrest and take them to Camp Wright, Oak Grove, and that he preferred to do so peaceably.

Some two hours were consumed in negotiating terms of surrender. Showalter demanded, in case of his surrender, that his men be allowed to carry their arms into camp. Wellman was only too glad to grant this request, as he had but eighteen men, whose horses, by constant traveling over mountain roads for three days and nights, were well nigh exhausted.

But Showalter had no idea of surrendering without a fight, but took advantage of the delay to obtain shelter for his animals out of the line of Wellman's fire. When this was accomplished, he sent word to Wellman that he had come to the conclusion not to go to Camp Wright unless compelled to by force. Wellman's bugle sounded the "Dismount" and then the "Deploy," and finally the "Advance," when just at this critical moment Company D, under Lieut. Vestal, came upon the scene and under the immediate eye of the Major.

Taking in the situation at a glance, Company D unslung knapsacks, and, with cheers, deployed as skirmishers and moved forward up the hill.

Showalter, seeing himself between two fires, raised the white flag and surrendered to Lieut. Wellman. They were escorted into Camp Wright by their captors at dark on the 29th, amid the cheers and rejoicings of the troops stationed there.

By virtue of the camp roster, notwithstanding my previous promotion, I was Officer of the Day on the 29th, and it devolved upon me to disarm the captured party. I marched them into a large tent, stood them in line, and, with the assistance of Lieut. Hargrave, who was Officer of the Guard, took each individual's name and the number and name of his arms. Their horses were corraled, and they were at last prisoners of Uncle Sam, made so without the

loss of blood on either side. They numbered twenty-two, and were the best armed men I ever saw, or expect to see.

Their weapons were of the latest pattern. Their fixed ammunition was carried in such a manner as to facilitate their loading and firing with rapidity. They were utterly loaded down with pistols and knives, besides their repeating rifles. Supposing that we had secured all of their arms, as we had carefully examined their baggage and persons, we bade them good-evening; when one of the party, by the name of Roberts—one of the finest specimens of humanity that could be found in ten thousand, standing fully six feet high, broad shouldered, with a full black beard, straight hair that fell over his massive neck and shoulders, while beneath heavy eyebrows shown a pair of coal-black eyes—stepped up to me and said:

“Captain, I have a little knife which you have overlooked in your search. I think it my duty to inform you of it, and request that I be allowed to retain it to cut my tobacco with.” “Oh, certainly, sir; keep it,” I replied. “But, Captain,” said Roberts, “you had better take a look at it, so that there may be no difficulty about it hereafter if found in my possession.”

At the same time he commenced to draw from the back of his neck, or coat rather, a wicked-looking knife about a foot and a half in length, which so astonished me that I thought it to be a broad sword.

A few days after the capture of these men, Major Rigg was ordered to Fort Yuma, and, being the ranking Captain at the post, I was placed in command of the troops at Camp Wright by the following letter:

HEADQUARTERS DETACHMENT 1ST INFANTRY AND CAVALRY, }
CALIFORNIA VOLUNTEERS, }
CAMP WRIGHT, SAN DIEGO, December 4, 1861.

Captain: In pursuance of instructions dated November 26, from James H. Carleton, Colonel commanding 1st California Volunteers, you will take command of this camp (post) until relieved by Major Ferguson, 1st Cavalry. Exercising every vigilance in keeping your command prepared for emergency, you will find all the orders you require in the order book and instructions in the letter book.

Respectfully,

EDWIN A. RIGG,
Major 1st Regt. Infy. Cal. Vols., Com'dg.

The first day of my official duty I received a note from Showalter asking permission to visit my quarters on business. I granted his request, and he was escorted under guard to my tent. He began his conversation by saying that my name was very familiar to him. I replied that his name was also familiar, as there were families by his name in my native county in Pennsylvania. Our conversation brought out the fact that he was from my native village, and he knew me, as he said, as a "tow-headed boy," while I remembered him as a young man going to school at Madison College. Years had intervened since those days, and, as a matter of course, time had changed us both, obliterating recognition in the usual way. He related his early and daring exploits in California, his political career as a legislator, and his trouble with a fellow member by the name of Piercy, the victim of his duel. He wound up his conversation by demanding that he and his party be sent to Los Angeles, there to be tried by the civil authorities.

This, as a matter of course, I refused. He raged and threatened, cried and cursed, all at the same time, and at last brought his fist down upon the table with an oath that he would take the desperate chance, in the face of the guard, and go. I ordered him returned to his quarters, and gave instructions to double the guard.

In fact, up to this time there was no proof positive that they were Confederates, or that they were on their way to join the Confederacy; they claimed to be on a prospecting tour, and were aiming for Arizona and New Mexico for that purpose.

On or about the 10th of December I received instructions from headquarters of the regiment to allow Showalter and his men to depart, taking with them their arms and horses. The day was set for their release, and the freedom of the camp was extended to them in order that they could prepare for their journey. They appeared to be very happy in anticipation of their freedom, and made themselves at home among the soldiers, engaging in foot-racing, ball-playing, joking and laughing, as though they were a part of Uncle Sam's army also.

The day before their final release was to have taken place, the cavalry brought in a captured mail-bag, and among the letters were several from Showalter to his friends in San Francisco, written several days before his capture. One of his letters, written from Temecula, clearly outlined his business, disclosing the fact that he and most of his party were commissioned officers in the Confederate army, and closed with these remarks: "We understand that a force of United States troops are stationed at Camp Wright, about twenty-six miles east of here. We intend to evade them by taking a trail over the mountains, south of their camp, strike the Colorado river below Fort Yuma, and when once on the other side, if they follow us, we will give them h—l."

I sent for Showalter and read to him the letter, and then told him that under the circumstances I should hold him and his men as prisoners of war until I communicated with Colonel Carleton. I made copies of his letters and forwarded the originals to Colonel Carleton, requesting instruction. In a day or so I received orders to hold them at all hazards and await further instructions. Further instructions were to turn over Showalter and the greater part of his men to Colonel Edw. E. Eyre, 1st California Cavalry, who was on the march from Los Angeles to Fort Yuma via Camp Wright.

In the meantime Major Ferguson had arrived and assumed command of Camp Wright, January 8, 1862. He transferred the prisoners to Colonel Eyre in accordance with the instructions that I had received.

On the 11th of January the following Orders No. 25 were read at dress parade:

HEADQUARTERS CAMP WRIGHT, CALIFORNIA, {
January 11, 1862. }

In compliance with instructions from District Headquarters, Captain H. A. Gorley, with half of his company (D, 1st Infantry, California Volunteers), are hereby detailed to proceed to Fort Yuma. The A. A. Q. M. will furnish such transportation as will be absolutely necessary, and no more, for this movement, and have it ready to-morrow morning. Captain Gorley will draw subsistence for his command to include the 24th inst. He will receive further detailed instructions previous to moving.

D. FERGUSON,
Major 1st Cal. C. V., Com'dg.

The letter of instructions read as follows:

HEADQUARTERS CAMP WRIGHT, CALIFORNIA, }
January 11, 1862.

Captain: You will start to-morrow morning, with half of your company (D), and take the general prisoners of this command named in Order 25 (herewith), under guard, and also the two civilian prisoners, William Hamilton and M. Morgan, at this camp, and deliver them all safely and securely to the commanding officer at Fort Yuma, to be there confined as directed by Colonel Carleton. For the delivery of these prisoners you will be held to a strict accountability, and to accomplish this duty you will exercise every vigilance yourself and put as strong a guard over the prisoners as your command will admit of, day and night, charging the non-commissioned officers and soldiers composing the guard that these prisoners must be delivered at all hazards.

Wishing you a safe and pleasant march, I am, sir,

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

D. FERGUSON,

Major Commanding.

In compliance with the above order, and armed with a letter of instruction, I left Camp Wright with the remnant of Showalter's party, in a heavy rainstorm, January 12, 1862. E. M. Morgan, mentioned in orders, was a nephew of the celebrated Confederate General of that name. We arrived at Fort Yuma, after a march of eight days of one hundred and eighty miles, safely. Having turned over my prisoners to the Officer of the Day, I reported to the commanding officer, Major E. A. Rigg, who complimented us on our successful march.

The Showalter prisoners were employed in assisting the troops in building earthworks around the Fort, in order to defend it against those whom they hoped to assist in capturing the great State of California. In the course of time they were released. Some of them found their way back to their homes in California, wiser if not better citizens; others went South and joined their friends in the Confederate army. Some went down in battle, fighting against the Republic.

Showalter was spared for a worse fate. After returning from the Rebel army he located at Mazatlan, Mexico, and was shot dead by his barkeeper in a drunken quarrel. And thus ended the career of one whose abilities warranted a better fate.

The majority of the brave spirits that stood by the country in its hour of trial in so desolate a region in which their soldier's lot was cast have no doubt answered the last roll-call on the shores of Eternity.





